

THE RATS OF THE LURONNE.

A Lost Gun, A Happy Inspiration and a Triumph Over Red Tape.

From the French.

There was a general clearing up on board the corvette La Luronne. During the sixteen years in which she had done duty in the waters of Alexandria, the Luronne had already been subjected to a number of overhauls; but now a despatch had come from the Ministry ordering a final dismantling of the vessel at the navy yard of Toulon.

And this was why, for two days, the rats concealed within her hospitable sides had lived in a mortal panic. Their fright was not entirely unwarranted, for during forty-eight hours Sergeant Madurec, who had several trouser linings and three or four pairs of shoes to avenge, had slaughtered them indefinitely.

Had they eaten anything, those rats? Madurec would have been enjoying a good income if he had received 20 sous for each time that the commissary, who was making an inventory of the appointments of the ship, had been obliged to write in the column headed "Cause of Loss," the words "Eaten by rats."

Madurec could not get over the voracity of the animals. He consoled himself, however, with the thought that neither would the rats get over it, and was deep in these meditations when he reflected that he was being called by the voice of the Lieutenant.

In the twinkling of an eye the sergeant was on the bridge in the presence of the Commander, the Lieutenant, and the commissary, who were making an inspection of the ship.

"Madurec," said the Commander, "how many rats have you killed?"

"Four, sir," answered the sergeant, astonished by the question.

"Have there never been more than four?"

"You ought to be able to tell, sir, as you have been on board the Luronne longer than the rest of us."

"It seems to me, sir, that I heard it said that once upon a time there were five, but I have never seen more than four myself, sir."

"Well, you see," said the Commander, turning to the commissary, "there must be some error in the former inventories—some paper may have been lost. It is very strange that no one connected with the ship had noticed this fact, and it is to be regretted that it escaped your notice. It is absolutely necessary that the irregularity should be remedied, and I count on you to straighten out the matter."

When the inspection was over, Commissary Fortinboul descended into his cabin, where he shut himself up, and began to work over the ledgers with the tenacity of a model official. At the end of four hours of exhausting work he found nothing.

"By all the powers of Neptune," he exclaimed, "what a fix. And to-morrow morning at 8 o'clock all the papers on board are to be taken away and the report signed by the commander. What is to be done?"

The dinner hour interrupted this monologue, but the commissary dined peacefully under the weight of a troubled mind. When leaving the table he sent for Madurec.

"You know the books," he said to the latter. "Give me a list, will you? We must find the commander. There is no help for it."

"At your service, sir," Madurec replied; and the two men, with great gravity, set themselves to dig into the records, but with no results.

Hours passed. The light of the lamp was already falling in the first rays of dawn, and still they had found no clue to the missing canon.

The commissary began to feel the perspiration of anxiety.

"I think I got square with a couple of dogs last night," said the suburban resident whose business keeps him out till 2 o'clock every morning, "and that without running foul of the S. P. C. A."

"The beastie haunts my street and the moment they hear my footstep they set up a barking which wakes up all the neighbors and sets them wondering what form of dissipation keeps me out so late."

"Well, I was carrying an umbrella unrolled last night and an inspiration struck me. One brute, a cross grained fox terrier, was standing in the fringe of shadow about twenty feet from a lamp post."

"I walked close up to him, he snarling and yapping to split your ears. At about ten feet range I suddenly opened the umbrella wide, right facing him."

"You know the odds of a dog's eye and the way it makes when you do it quickly. Well, sir, I was astonished at the result."

"That dog gave a low growl of alarm and turned a flip in his head to get away. He ran clear into the middle of a big vacant plot before he stopped."

"I tried it again a minute later on a big black and white pointer, and the result was the same. I dashed the umbrella open, his nose changed to sharp yelps of agony, and I'm sure I don't know where he stopped running. He certainly got clear of the block. I was startled myself at the success of my experiment."

"I recommend the umbrella cure for dogs. Try it."

"More than this, I have proved that the smell of a human being acts as an irritant to the nostrils of the deer, causing them to sneeze violently and repeatedly, the way a man will after he has inhaled red pepper or tobacco dust."

"So soon as the human odor reaches a feeding deer it will wrinkle the flesh surrounding its nostrils and curl its upper lip back, exposing the toothless gums at the front of the upper jaw. Then it shakes its head, and the deer is off, when annoyed by fire, after which it begins to tremble."

"The conduct of the deer indicates extreme annoyance instead of terror, and the deer will not flee until it has been driven away by the odor of the human being, and in every case the animals have been as badly frightened as if a living human being had been in the garments."

"I think I have demonstrated," said Mr. Capen, "that it is not man, but the smell of man which causes the deer to take alarm. To prove my hypothesis I have often placed clothes which had been worn by members of our party so the deer could smell them, and in every case the animals have been as badly frightened as if a living human being had been in the garments."

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THE MAN WHO DIDN'T KILL STROBELOFF.

Fate of a Nihilist Who Wavered, as Related by the Rev. Adolph Roeder.

"The death of De Plehve," said the Rev. Adolph Roeder of Orange, N. J., "was a very curious incident which brought me in touch with the murder of Strobeloff, the Russian Chief of Police who was killed by the Nihilists in the '80s."

"It was a peculiar thing to happen to an American citizen, and the incidents in their order make a complete and finished story such as one doesn't often encounter in real life."

"One day, in 1887, a man sat on a bench in a park in Baltimore, planning the best way to commit suicide. He had sat on the bench all night. He had no money, he knew no one in America, he had been unable to get work, and he thought that he had got about all out of life that was coming to him."

"In the morning a workman on his way to work noticed that the man was in trouble and spoke to him. They fell into conversation, and it ended in the workman's offering him a job. The man, who was a Russian, accepted the offer, and he was employed as a private charity organization."

"The man reached my house just at breakfast time. I told him he needn't commit suicide till after breakfast, anyway, and then he could tell me his story."

"He unfolded a curious tale. He gave his name as Nikola Henckel and said he was the son of a dual house of nobles, a German and a Russian. His mother was a Russian and a relative of the Czar."

"When he left school, in a burst of youthful enthusiasm he joined the Nihilists, as he was then living in Russia. A detective, however, had been following him, and he was drawn to the police by a Russian shoemaker, with a basement shop. He got this shoemaker drunk, and in that condition got the story out of him, or enough of it to know pretty well what had happened."

"The shoemaker had accused Henckel on some pretext, and had invited him into a mining claim, which he was working with a partner."

"The partner stole all his money and ran away one night. He walked eighty miles to escape, and got a berth to work his passage on a ship. The ship came to Baltimore, where he was discharged. He had found no other work, had used up all his money, and he received no answer to his letters home, and there he was."

"He took down the 'Almanach de Gotha' and showed me his family tree and record. That did not make his story any the less wild, but I could see that he was a young fellow of high education and acquainted with many languages."

"I consulted a friend, and between us we found him some pupils, and put him in the way of earning a living. He seemed very grateful, and promised to repay all we had spent on him."

"Before he had done so, however, he disappeared. It was a very hot day in August, and we made the rounds of the hospital, thinking he might have been over come with the heat. When we did not find him we shook hands, congratulated each other that the experiment had not been a costly one, and dismissed it as one more case of misplaced confidence."

"But a few weeks after that I received a letter from a lawyer. This lawyer said he had received a remittance of several hundred dollars for Nikola Henckel from his mother, and said he understood that he had given his mother the name of Henckel, whereabouts."

"We began to think Henckel's story might be true, and I called on the lawyer to see if he could give me any information of Nikola Henckel's whereabouts."

"He turned his attention to the Russians in the city."

"For some reason or other his suspicions were aroused, and he was certain that Henckel was in the city. He turned his attention to the Russians in the city."

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ONE KINDNESS DESERVES ANOTHER

Revenge of the Widow Whose Pet Cat Was Poisoned by a Neighbor.

From the French.

Fate, which often is so hard toward us poor mortals—I know whereof I speak—had showed itself kind, even generous, to Mme. de Blentruff. Having inherited a small fortune sufficient to support her for life, she spent her days in undisturbed quiet and happiness, in the company of the janitor's wife, Mrs. Blanche, an old friend from England; Miss Antoinette Koudoroff, and a gray Angora cat that responded to the name of Minouchon and had no equal as a mouser.

The domestic affairs of the country had no interest for her; the foreign wars did not trouble her, and politics was to her an almost unknown world. When I have told you that she had arrived at the mature age of 74 without knowing what the news or even an infirmity is, that she always read without glasses and regularly partook of her four meals a day and had her daily walk, you will readily admit that she enjoyed a rare good fortune and that she had every reason to be happy.

It goes without saying that such happiness could not avoid exciting great jealousy and giving rise to much gossip among the amiable neighbors of Mme. de Blentruff. In talking about her some of the neighbors called her simply by her name, preferred to employ disagreeable epithets, such as "that woman" or "that creature."

Others credited her fortune with the most questionable origins, of which the most honorable by far was theft. Still others were always amazed at the fact that the proprietor of the house had not yet shown "them" the door. It is to be understood, of course, that this pharisaical monsignor referred to her and her pet cat.

Among her most implacable enemies might be ranked the family Galuchard. The wife spent her days in gossiping and the husband his in taking naps; but there was this difference between them, that while she did not leave the house, he never left the office.

Burning with an almost Carthaginian hatred, Mme. Galuchard comprised under the same malediction Mme. de Blentruff and her cat Minouchon, vowing incessantly with set teeth that some day or other she would cook their soup for them.

The piano on which her old neighbor sometimes played threw her into fits of mad rage, which were accentuated only by the meowing of the cat. She had already several times demanded the execution of the animal, and every time the poor old lady had usually refused to comply with the demand, denying the charge that her pet attracted all the tomcats of the neighborhood.

"Madame," you killed my cat by giving him arsenic! As for the cat, he deserved it. I make you a present of my bloodhound."

"I took him up, and we looked at the book and so, and I looked at a number. Then I said it would be all right; he would move us both in."

"Just then I had an idea, and in a joking spirit I let him see it. He was a member of the book, and by Jove he wasn't a member either."

"Just then the Judge, who had caught on, began to laugh, and he finally settled it by having the clerk move us all in a bunch."

"This brings to mind the fact that it was his failure to be admitted to practice before the Circuit Court of this district, except by courtesy of the judges, which was the cause of that important lumbering operation: connected with the Peter Power case from punishment for contempt. Although he had appeared regularly in the courts, he came for weeks when proceedings were begun to punish him, the true facts were ascertained and the Court decided that it lacked jurisdiction."

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